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ABSTRACT

To assist educators in effectively teaching the works of such a critical author as William Shakespeare, this Digest identifies and describes some of the most significant and useful online resources. The digest notes that the sites were chosen on the basis of their technical excellence, purpose, content, authorship, and general usefulness for teachers and parents attempting to introduce Shakespeare to their children. It recommends the Foldger Library site and the AskERIC Web site as offering a wide variety of lesson plans. It also points out six other Web sites which provide comprehensive resources, including lesson plans and teaching ideas. In addition, two sites with a unique focus and two sites which offer full-text works online are listed. (NKA)

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Online Resources for Teaching Shakespeare

ERIC Digest

By

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and
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Online Resources for Teaching Shakespeare

By Mila Stoicheva

The Technology in Education 2001 Survey (Market Data Retrieval, 2001) reveals that nearly 70% of schools report that the majority of their teachers use the Internet for instructional purposes, and more than 70% use computers on a daily basis. Parallel to the rapid growth in the number of users of Web sites has been an exponential growth in the number of sites, challenging the efforts of teachers and parents to identify and select the most relevant sites for any particular project (Lu, 1999). This is particularly true for subjects or topics as exhaustively represented on the Web as William Shakespeare and the teaching of his works.

To assist educators in effectively teaching the works of this critical author, this Digest will identify and describe some of the most significant and useful online resources. The Web sites were chosen on the basis of their technical excellence, purpose, content, authorship, and general usefulness (Abdullah, 1998) for teachers and parents attempting to introduce Shakespeare to their children. Note that, consistent with the nature of the Internet itself, most of these sites cross-reference each other in unique ways to create a cornucopia of ideas for teaching and learning about the life and works of Shakespeare.

I. Lesson Plans

In a survey entitled *Hot Spots: Picks of Language Arts Websites* (Lu & Abdullah, 1999), teachers reported that their favorite Web sites were characterized by a high level of immediate applicability. Teachers who responded to the survey indicated that the most useful sites were those providing a wide array of practical teaching ideas. The Folger Shakespeare Library and AskERIC Lesson Plans correspond closely to that ideal, offering a wide variety of lessons plans, ready for classroom use.

The Folger Shakespeare Library
http://www.folger.edu/education/teaching.htm
Since 1984, the library has held eleven Teaching Shakespeare Institutes funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities which bring together scholars, master teachers, and actors and offer classroom teachers the opportunity to do research in the world's foremost Shakespeare collection. The Web site contains a lesson plans archive with materials introducing Shakespeare, and it also offers general lessons, elementary lessons, film lessons, interactive media lessons, as well as an abundance of lessons on specific plays.

AskERIC Lesson Plans
http://ericir.syr.edu/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Language_Arts/Literature
This collection contains more than 2,000 unique lesson plans which have been written and submitted to AskERIC by teachers from all over the United States and the world. The collection grows with contributions from individual teachers.

II. Comprehensive Resources

This category of Web sites also includes lesson plans and teaching ideas. However, these sites tend to work more as comprehensive collections of all things Shakespearean.

Electronic Shakespeare
http://www.wfu.edu/~tedforrl/shakespeare/
This site is maintained by Rosalind Tedford of Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC. It provides access to an enormous array of Shakespearean sites, including those offering Shakespeare's works, teaching resources, and Shakespearean theatres, festivals, and companies.

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/intro.htm
This site is maintained by Terry A. Gray of Palomar College, San Marcos, CA. It includes a rich variety of resources on the works, life and times, theatre and criticism of Shakespeare. In addition, it links to sites related to Shakespeare, Elizabethan, and Renaissance studies, as well as to the Bible, Classics, and Medieval literature that influenced Shakespeare and other Elizabethan authors. The site also contains courses and lesson plans.

Mila Stoicheva holds an M.S. degree in International and Comparative Education from Indiana University. She is a former User Services Coordinator for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, and she now teaches ESL as an adjunct faculty member at National-Louis University in Chicago and Harper College, Palatine, IL.

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Shakespeare for Teachers and Students
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/shakes.htm
This is a Web site of the Internet School Library Media Center at James Madison University, maintained by Inez Ramsey, Professor Emeritus. It features online texts of Shakespeare's works, biographies of Shakespeare, lesson plans, and information on the Globe Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, and other topics.

Shakespeare Online
http://www.shakespeare-online.com/
This site is maintained by Amanda Mabillard, who is also the Shakespeare guide on About.com. Among the abundant resources found on this site are full-text plays and sonnets, analyses and essays, a biography and sources for his plays. It also has an interactive capability, allowing users to ask questions and take quizzes.

Surfing with the Bard
http://www.ulen.com/shakespeare/
This Web site is the work of Amy Ulen of the University of Idaho. It includes a "Bard Zones" section, focused on discussion, resources for students and teachers, plays, reviews, and even a "fun with Willy," section devoted to "the silly side of Shakespeare." In addition, it contains the Shakespeare Magazine, in which free lesson-of-the-month plans are featured.

The Shakespeare Resource Center
http://www.bardweb.net/
J. M. Pressley has been the designer, webmaster, and content editor of the Shakespeare Resource Center since its inception in 1997. This site contains resources about Shakespeare's life and works, play synopses, and information on Elizabethan England and The Globe Theatre. It also features the text of Shakespeare's last will and testament, and resources on the debate over the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

III. Sites with a Unique Focus

One of the most useful categories of Web sites, particularly for those doing relatively advanced research, is that which offers highly detailed looks at certain aspects of Shakespearean literature. Presented here are two of the most useful Web sites of this type.

Shakespeare Illustrated
http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html
Described by its author, Harry Rusche of Emory University, as a work in progress, Shakespeare Illustrated is unique in that it explores the relationships between the plays and the painters, actors, and critics that have represented and discussed his works.

Shakespeare's Globe Research Database
http://www.rdg.ac.uk/globe/
This site, sponsored by the University of Reading, UK and maintained by Lyn Holman, is dedicated to providing background information on Shakespearean performances in original conditions.

IV. Full-text Works Online

Sites that offer the full text of Shakespeare's works are especially valuable. The following are among the best.

The Electronic Text Center of the University of Virginia Library
http://etext.virginia.edu/shakespeare/
This center contains a wealth of publicly accessible materials ranging from early Quartos, the complete 1623 First Folio, and early playhouse promptbooks, to more modern editions and many bibliographical articles that discuss Shakespeare's works.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare
http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html
This site was created by Jeremy Hylton and is operated by *The Tech*, MIT's oldest and largest newspaper. It has offered Shakespeare's plays and poetry to the Internet community since 1993.

Conclusion

Finding information on the Internet regarding Shakespeare is a very simple task; but finding the sites offering the most comprehensive, reliable, and efficiently presented information is more difficult. The above sites provide excellent portals through which teachers, parents, and researchers can venture into the online world of William Shakespeare.

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